

Creating a Safe Environment

TIP SHEET

As workforce professionals, we meet with customers everyday who need our help to find a job, but that isn't always the only hurdle they are facing. Some of our customers may be experiencing feelings of frustration, hopelessness, and even despair.

Creating a safe environment is a crucial part of setting the stage for a successful customer interaction. In order to provide the most effective services, we must recognize that the customer's experience in our centers is an important part of helping them achieve success.

Customers facing difficult obstacles or trauma may need to share things that are deeply personal and difficult to discuss. When we create a safe environment, we are allowing that person to share their feelings and thoughts openly.

Here are a few tips to help you create a safe environment:



Create an inviting space.

Declutter your area. Keep it neat and clean. Sometimes, having too much stuff in a small space can be a trigger for stress. Adding small touches to your space such as pleasing artwork, plants, or positive messages can be comforting.



Offer comfort.

Have tissue and even bottled water available. If a customer becomes distraught, sometimes it is helpful to offer a tissue or a drink to help them deescalate and regain their composure.



Ensure a sense of privacy.

While space may be limited in some offices, try to buffer sound by adding some background noise such as a radio or sound machine at a low volume. If possible, have a private space available for sensitive conversations. Keep conversations with co-workers to a minimum when a customer is present and never discuss customers within earshot of others. Confidentiality is critical to establish trust and rapport.



Listen.

Be an active listener. Ask clarifying questions or make statements that demonstrate that you hear and understand their issues.



Follow through and follow up.

Don't overpromise. We can't solve every problem a customer has and chances are, that is not what they expect. Don't agree to do things that you aren't able to do. It is better to acknowledge their feelings and only promise what you know you can deliver. Also, make sure to follow up on the action items you did agree to do. Check in with the customer to ensure that they are on target. Your willingness to check in will go a long way in establishing trust.



Show genuine concern.

Demonstrate empathy and compassion. Showing concern and understanding will help the customer to feel more comfortable and open to conversation.